



## A SERIOUS AFFAIR.

It is always an inscrutable mystery to everybody why other people quarrel. For our own little arguments there is always, of course, good, sound and sufficient reason; for the disputes of other folks the excuse appears ever absurdly inadequate. Why, for instance, young Greig and Miss Norman, both returning from India on the Bengal, should break off with amazing suddenness their engagement just as the Bengal was nearing the Bay of Biscay it was not easy to see.

But they did. "And I suppose," said young Greig, with a face that looked less bronzed than usual, "that nothing I can say will alter your decision? Your mind is quite made up?"

"It always is," declared Miss Norman. She held tightly to the brass rail and looked away at the spot in the distance which represented Spain. It is best when quarrelling with anyone you have cared for not to look at that person's eyes.

"I particularly wish that, for the time that we shall have to travel together, we shall see as little of each other as possible. We can easily say 'good-by' at Plymouth."

"It will not be easy for me," said Henry Greig. "I am not used to saying good-by to anyone that I—that I have—"

"You should be glad of a new experience, Mr. Greig. It's a precious thing nowadays."

"You're not yourself this morning, Elsie."

"I wish I were not!" she exclaimed, with a sudden change of manner. "If I were some one else I wouldn't be so unhappy. Here is Mrs. Renton. She mustn't see my eyes. This is the last time we shall speak to each other. Good-by!"

"But, I say, isn't there some means—"

Elsie Norman held out her hand. Greig pressed it and she turned and went below. Mrs. Renton sank into her deck-chair carefully, as stout ladies do, and seemed gratified when the deck chair only creaked complacently and did not give way.

"Mr. Greig, pray come here at once. Miss Norman monopolizes your time to such an extent that we poor women see nothing of you. Sit down here at once and tell me all about yourself."

"It is an uninteresting subject," said Greig, pulling another deck chair to the side of Mrs. Renton.

"Tell me a secret, then. I'm exceedingly fond of secrets. When are you going to marry Miss Norman?"

"Never."

"Never? Of course you're both young, but that seems a long time to wait, doesn't it? Mr. Van Straaten said—"

"Van Straaten is an old fool of the kind they make in Germany. I shall have to ask Van Straaten not to interfere with my affairs."

"His servant Hans is a queer youth. He looks after the diamond samples, I suppose."

"I haven't seen Hans. But Van Straaten is the sort of old nuisance that ought to be labeled, like some of the luggage, 'Not wanted on voyage.'"

"He always speaks very highly of Miss Norman," remarked Mrs. Renton, thoughtfully.

"Why shouldn't he?"

"Precisely. She is very charming, no doubt. But she should remember that she is only a girl after all."

"That fact has not escaped notice, Mrs. Renton."

Mrs. Renton looked complacently down the undulating scene that her plump figure furnished, and lifted first one small foot and then the other from under the hem of her yellow skirt. The number appeared to be correct, for Mrs. Renton, having mentally audited them, sighed with satisfaction.

"There is such a thing," said the widow, confidentially, "as common sense."

"I know. Cheap eau-de-cologne and—"

"No, no. Sense. S-e-n-s-e."

"I wonder where, Mrs. Renton?"

"Any suspicion?" asked the captain. "I am not so sure. I am not so sure."

"Any person on board see them?"

"Von person only. Mr. Greig, if you please, come here. I show you my precious diamonds, ain't it, two days after we leave Calcutta?"

"That's so," said Greig, cheerfully. "And very magnificent diamonds they were. I remember telling you that I wished one or two were mine, so that I might give them to—"

"He stopped."

"If suppose we shall have to search the cabin," said the captain of the Bengal. "It's a fearful nuisance, ladies and gentlemen; but it can't be helped. May we begin with yours, Mr. Greig?"

"I really don't know," protested Greig, "why I should have my cabin upset and turned out just because—"

"I desire that Mr. Greig's cabin should be searched," said Mr. Van Straaten, insistently.

"That settles it, then," said Henry Greig, carelessly. "Fire away. I'll come down with you."

The crowd went below and stood in the corner while the examination was progressing. Elsie Norman, hearing the noise, left her aunt, and rather red at eyes, came forward. The captain, Mr. Van Straaten, the chief steward and Henry Greig reappeared at the door of the cabin. The old German bore a leather case very carefully in his arms.

"The diamonds have been found," announced the captain of the Bengal, seriously. "We shall not have to trouble you, ladies and gentlemen."

They were only ordinary folks, rather bored by the tediousness of the journey from Calcutta, and they could not help showing a certain relish over the diversion.

"Most painful affair, really."

"Case found under the pillow in the berth."

"Seemed such an honest fellow, too."

"My dear," said Mrs. Renton, bitterly, "it doesn't do to trust any one nowadays. You never know who's who."

"But you'd think really on a P. and O. steamship—"

"I'm sorry for that poor Miss Norman. She was engaged to him, you know."

"Oh, that's broken off quite definitely. I heard her tell the old German so. The old fellow asked her what was the matter, and she told him. He was a partner of her father's, you know, and he seemed much concerned about it. You see, dear, I wasn't exactly listening, but—"

"But you heard, dear—that's the main point. Come into my cabin and see my new serge dress."

They went aft, leaving Greig at the door of his cabin. He was holding the sides to prevent himself from falling. Other passengers went past his cabin, keeping carefully to the other side of the narrow corridor. None of them spoke to him, but they all spoke to each other.

"What does this mean?" cried Henry Greig. "Do they suspect me of—"

"Harry!"

A soft, white hand on his arm, with a kindly pressure. He turned and smiled gladly.

"Elsie! Aren't you, too going to follow them?"

"Tell me first what it all means."

It did not take him long to put that girl into possession of the facts. Her face flamed red with indignation.

"And they dare to think that you would do a thing like that?"

"Well," said Greig, uneasily, "they found the things there, you see. It's circumstantial evidence of rather an awkward kind. But I needn't tell you, Miss Norman—"

"My name is still Elsie."

"My dear girl, I needn't tell you that I shouldn't dream of taking poor old Van Straaten's diamonds, nor anybody else's."

serve Mr. Van Straaten's almost comical appearance of injury. On the other hand, it was delightful to feel that close to him in this time of stress, as he sat on deck or strolled up and down, was a cheerful young person in her very best spirits. The boy meanwhile sympathetically behaved in a manner quite exemplary.

"I am astonished, my dear," said Mr. Van Straaten, severely, "that you should be friendly with Mr. Greig after what has happened already. I strongly advise you to get him up. You told me you had decided—"

"I've changed my mind," she said definitely. "Women folks are not good at a lot of things, but we do know how to change our minds."

Mr. Van Straaten lifted his hat and turned away. The old gentleman, when he was a few paces off, seemed agitated—so much so that he had to pat his eyes gently with his scarlet handkerchief. He called to one of the sailors:

"Dell my man Hans to come up instantly."

Much commotion after the appearance of the stolid-faced Hans. A rush toward that part of the ship by all the passengers on deck. Swift talking in German. Considerable temper on the part of Van Straaten; penitent words from Hans.

"Mr. Greig," cried the old German, "come here directly. And Miss Norman. Listen to this horrible man of mine. I had lost also my hatbox. I ask him where it is, and he replies that he thinks he placed it by mistake in Mr. Greig's cabin. Is it not so, Hans?"

Sorrowful acknowledgment from the profusely penitent Hans. Mr. Van Straaten raised his voice:

"Then I say to him: 'Is it possible that you careless schoundrel you placed also by mistake the diamond box in Mr. Greig's cabin?' And he says, 'Yes.'"

Quite a noisy cheering from the assembled passengers. A pressing forward to congratulate Greig. He, delighted beyond question, turned to Elsie Norman:

"You don't regret being counsel for my defense, young Portia?"

"You are just the client I like."

"And respecting this morning?"

"Sir! I do not respect this morning. Let's look forward."

They walked forward.

"Dot was a good drick of mine," said Mr. Van Straaten, as he watched them. He wiped his glasses carefully. "I knew it would answer. It was once, a long time ago, in love immensely."—St. James Budget.

The Indian Swell.

A long-skirted tunic or frock of white muslin, close-fitting white trousers, and a rose-colored turban with a broad band of gold lace and tall, flashing plume of dark feathers and gold filigree, were the salient points. Other accessories were the sword belt, crossing his breast and encircling his waist, of dark green velvet, richly worked with unalloyed gold, and thickly studded with emeralds, rubies and brilliants; a transparent yellow shield of rhinoceros hide, with knobs of black and gold enamel; a snash of stiff, gold lace, with a crimson thread running through the gold; bracelets of the dainty workmanship known as Jeypore enamel thickly jeweled, which he wore on his wrists and arms; and there were strings of dull, uncut stones about his neck.

The skirts of his tunic were plaited with many folds and stood stiffly out, like the skirts of a "premiere danseuse" in ballet, and when he mounted his horse a servant on either side held them so that they might not be crushed.

Four valets had charge of this costume, and it took them some time to array their master. The trappings of the horse were scarcely less elaborate; his neck was covered on one side with silver plates, and his mane, which hung on the other side, was braided and lengthened by black fringes relieved by silver ornaments.

White yak's tail hung from beneath the embroidered saddle cover on both sides, and his head, incased in a head-stall of white enamelled leather and silver, topped with tall silvernet, was tied down by an embroidered scarf in order to give his neck the requisite curve.

Beyond His Means.

The Chicago Herald tells an amusing bit of experience which one of that city's benevolent men had with a beggar. The gentleman has a regular staff of "visitors," to whom he gives alms according to their needs and his ability. There is one old fellow whose calls are as punctual as the sun.

On a recent occasion this man accosted Mr. G. as usual, and received from him a half-dollar.

The beggar took it, thanked the donor, and turned toward the door. Before reaching it, however, he seemed to be considering a matter very seriously. He hesitated, stopped, and then turned to Mr. G. again, saying, "Excuse me, sir, I would like to ask you a question."

"Well, what is it?" asked Mr. G.

"It is this. Every month for years past you have given me a dollar, but to-day I come, and you give me only fifty cents. How is that?"

"Well, I'll tell you," said Mr. G., smiling good-humoredly. "I have had some unusually heavy expenses this month. My eldest daughter got married, and the outlay for her trousseau, etc., has compelled me to retrench in every direction."

"Ah, yes, I see," said the beggar. "But, Mr. G., I really can't afford to contribute toward your daughter's wedding expenses."

Science Versus Custom.

In Hungary, where it is the custom for school children to kiss the hand of their teachers on coming and going, the Board of Education has forbidden the practice for the future. Their decision is based on a declaration of the Sanitary Council to the effect that kissing is a dangerous proceeding always, and should not be practiced unless absolutely necessary, as it is a certain means of carrying infection, especially in the case of small children.

Consistency.

"Now, you must not repeat this," said Jones to Smith, after retelling a choice bit of scandal. "Oh, certainly not," said Smith. "How did you happen to hear it?" "My wife told me. She is just like any woman—cannot keep a secret of course."

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